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ECE ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT

(Commission decision 0 (45))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. By operative paragraph 2(e) of decision 0 (45) the Commission invited the Executive Secretary, inter alia, to prepare annual reports on proposed initiatives and work programme elements having environmental aspects for consideration by the Commission. This would ensure coordination of the ECE's activities in the area of environment on a continuing basis.

2. The information is presented in accordance with main areas of cooperation in the fields of environmental protection, rational use of natural resources and sustainable development identified, among other areas' in the Espoo Ministerial Statement (ECE/ENVWA/18, Annex I):

- Environmental policy and strategy;
- Integration of environmental and economic objectives and policies;
- Environmental management in the light of changing socio-economic conditions;
- Environmental impact assessment;
- Water management;

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- Soil management;
- Air pollution problems;
- Waste management;
- Environmentally sound technology and products;
- Environmentally sound management of chemicals and dangerous goods;
- Energy efficiency and conservation;
- Industrial accidents;
- Natural resource management;
- Monitoring of the state of the environment and environmental information;
- Awareness raising and public participation.

Environmental policy and strategy

3. A number of activities of the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems, reported on under other headings below and resulting in policy recommendations to ECE Governments, are intended to assist countries in developing or adapting existing environmental policies and strategies so as to harmonize them at a regional level and to promote their implementation.

4. The Senior Advisers will, in cooperation with OECD, take steps to review the performance of those ECE countries which are not members of OECD in meeting environmental policy objectives and regional commitments on the basis of the methodology established by OECD for the review of its member countries (1)*.

5. The Senior Advisers have been invited to contribute to the preparation of the Conference "Environment for Europe" to be convened by the Government of Switzerland in late 1992 or early 1993, in particular by elaborating (a) a draft Ministerial Declaration for adoption at the Conference, and (b) elements for an evolving environmental programme for Europe (2).

The integration of environmental and economic objectives and policies

6. As a follow-up to the Bergen Conference (May 1990), a Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics was set up to promote the integration of environmental and economic objectives and policies and to enhance cooperation towards sustainable development (3). The Joint Working Group would provide a forum for the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) relevant to environment and economics at the regional level.

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*/ Numbers refer to the ECE activities in the field of environment listed in the synoptic table attached.

7. In order to promote environmentally sustainable agriculture, the Committee on Agriculture has set up a Working Party on Relations between Agriculture and the Environment, which will study in particular economic, legal, technological and regulatory measures for the promotion of sustainable development and production of healthy food, and prepare, inter alia, a compendium, draft codes and regulations (4).

8. The Committee on Human Settlements is promoting sustainable development in urban and rural settlements to advance environmental soundness (5).

9. The Conference of European Statisticians is preparing the draft ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Environmental Protection Facilities and Expenditures (6).

Environmental management in the light of changing socio-economic conditions

10. The Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems are promoting assistance to member countries with economies in transition for the integration of environmental considerations in planning, decision-making and economic activities. Workshops are organized to exchange information and analyse experience in specific areas of environmental management (7). The Senior Advisers are periodically informed about initiatives and existing projects, in the field of bilateral and multilateral financial cooperation in the ECE region, of relevance to environmental protection, rational use of natural resources and sustainable development (8).

11. The Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics is evaluating the situation in countries in transition with special attention to the impact of environmental conditions on economic development. At its session in December 1991 it considered a report on economy and ecology in the former Soviet Union and will consider one prepared by Czechoslovakia at its next session. The analysis of economic restructuring and the environment in countries in transition will be the topic for a workshop in Hungary in 1992 (9). The Joint Working Group also addressed the problem of costing and funding of environmental policies in the context of competing priorities, with special reference to the needs of countries in transition (10); examined macro-economic implications of environmental policies; and provided a transfer of experience from market-economy countries to economies in transition (3).

12. The Working Party on Relations between Agriculture and the Environment is studying the integration of environmental aspects in the process of agricultural reforms and transmission of recent experience in this field to economies in transition on the basis of pilot or demonstration projects (11).

13. The Committee on Human Settlements is promoting human settlements management and environmental protection in the process of socio-economic transition in order to improve the quality of the urban environment and create better conditions to integrate environmental aspects into urban planning and the management process (12).

Environmental impact assessment

14. The 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context has been signed by 28 countries and the European Community. A meeting

of Signatories prepared a work-plan for the implementation of the Convention pending its entry into force and to prepare for the first Meeting of the Parties (13).

15. A task force with the United States as lead country finalized a report on the application of environmental impact assessment (EIA) principles to policies, plans and programmes, including a set of draft recommendations to ECE countries for adoption by the Senior Advisers (14).

16. An assessment of the impact of road vehicles on the environment, of pollution emissions, of noise and of energy consumption was undertaken by the Inland Transport Committee in cooperation with other competent bodies. The results of this work are reflected in the development of the corresponding international regulations applicable to the construction of vehicles (15).

Water management

17. The draft Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes was prepared for adoption by the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems in March 1992 (16).

18. A synthesis report, including recommendations on the protection of inland water against eutrophication (ENVWA/WP.3/R.22), is ready for adoption by the Senior Advisers (17). Based on the outcome of a Seminar held in Oslo (Norway) in 1991, the Senior Advisers, assisted by their Working Party on Water Problems, will elaborate guidelines to ECE Governments in the form of a code of practice for the ecosystem approach to water management in 1992 (18). The Senior Advisers are also reviewing existing methods for elaborating water quality criteria and objectives including draft recommendations to ECE Governments (19) and developing draft recommendations on the substitution and reduction of the use of substances that are hazardous to the ecosystem, bearing in mind the need to maintain viable agricultural practices (20).

19. The Conference of European Statisticians is developing the ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Surface Freshwater Quality for the Maintenance of Aquatic Life and a corresponding classification for ecological marine water quality and for discharges of water pollutants. These classifications will be used in future data collections (21).

Soil management

20. The Working Party on Relations between Agriculture and the Environment (AGRI/WP.4/2) is promoting the creation of a liaison centre in Hungary for monitoring systems related to soil conservation as regards technical implications (22), and is examining the following problems: conservation of water and soil resources; management of water resources on the farm and in rural areas; control of water and soil pollution by fertilizers, manure, pesticides and farm wastes; prevention of land degradation (23). A report is being finalized on the role of mechanization in agriculture in the ECE region with emphasis on the environmental and economic aspects (24).

Air pollution problems

21. Under the auspices of its Executive Body, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) is being implemented together with its related protocols on: Long-term Financing of the Co-operative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP), 1984 (ECE/EB.AIR/11); the Reduction of Sulphur Emissions or their Transboundary Fluxes by at least 30%, 1985 (ECE/EB.AIR/12); the Control of Emissions of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes, 1988 (ECE/EB.AIR/21); the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes, 1991 (ECE/EB/AIR/30). The elaboration of a draft protocol for further reduction of sulphur emissions after 1993 and preparations for the second step of the Protocol concerning actual reductions of Nitrogen Oxide Emissions or their Transboundary Fluxes is underway (25). Four international cooperative programmes are being implemented on the environmental effects of air pollution on forests, rivers and lakes, materials and monuments, and agricultural crops, as well as the pilot programme on the integrated monitoring of air pollution effects on ecosystems (26).

22. The Steering Body to EMEP has prepared recommendations regarding measurements of hydrocarbons (VOCs) to be incorporated into the EMEP programme. Future emission inventories of air pollutants will be carried out in cooperation with the European Community (CORINAIR). The Executive Body for the Convention adopted these recommendations at its ninth session. (27)

Waste management

23. The Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems are elaborating a Regional Strategy on Integrated Waste Management, aimed at harmonizing policies on waste management at national and international levels (28). Recommendations to ECE Governments on reduction, replacement, recovery, recycling and re-utilization of waste have been finalized by the Working Party on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes for adoption by the Senior Advisers (29).

24. The Working Parties on the Chemical Industry and on Steel are preparing technical studies and organizing workshops in the fields of: management of plastic wastes in the ECE region; waste treatment in industrial parks; and the use of iron and steel scrap. The conclusions will be used for the development of rational methods for the recycling and re-use of industrial wastes (30).

25. The Conference of European Statisticians has revised the draft ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Wastes in the course of data collection for the 1992 Compendium of Environment Statistics (31).

Environmentally sound technology and products

26. With a view to promoting integrated policies and managerial instruments for both low-waste technology and environmentally sound products, the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems will convene a Seminar in Warsaw (Poland) in 1993 (32). A task force, with the Netherlands as lead country, is developing a methodology for setting up environmental product profiles to improve the flow of information on environmentally related specifications of a product (33). The Working Party on Low- and Non-waste Technology and

Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes will review the development and application of environmental technology and progress made in the implementation of the Declaration on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes in the ECE region (34).

27. A study on substitutes for tripolyphosphate in detergents was completed by the Working Party on the Chemical Industry (35).

Environmentally sound management of chemicals and dangerous goods

28. In accordance with the decisions of the Bergen Conference, a High-level Meeting on Cooperation and Sustainable Development in the Chemical Industry will be organized from 10 to 12 March 1992 in Warsaw (Poland) in cooperation with the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC) and with the support of the Commission of the European Communities (36).

29. The Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused During Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD) to Life, Property and Environment was adopted by the Inland Transport Committee. The Convention is based on the principles of strict and limited liability, the channelling of responsibility and compulsory insurance (37). The Committee is continuing to review, develop and update the recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods by road, rail, inland waterways and combined transport (38) as well as the technical annexes to the European Agreement for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) (39).

30. As a follow-up to the CSCE Sofia Meeting on the Protection of the Environment, the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems, in cooperation with OECD, are promoting regional cooperation for the management of hazardous chemicals and, in particular, the extension of systems and concepts established by OECD for its member countries to the ECE region as a whole. An ad hoc meeting in Vienna (Austria) in September 1991 made proposals to this effect and another will be convened in Sweden in 1993 to review progress made (40). In cooperation with OECD a workshop on principles of good laboratory practice and compliance therewith, in particular in countries with economies in transition, will be organized in Hungary in 1992.

31. The Conference of European Statisticians is evaluating current statistics on production, storage, transport and use of chemicals from an environmental point of view (41).

Energy efficiency and conservation

32. The Committee on Energy agreed on the following activities in this field: (a) promotion of energy reforms and restructuring in electric power, coal and gas industries in central and eastern Europe (42); (b) implementation of the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project including development and promotion of energy-efficient and environmentally sound technologies for member Governments (43); and (c) examination of the interface between energy and the environment, in particular environmental protection in coal and gas industries and electric power and of the possibility of elaborating energy efficient standards and labels for some categories of products (44). The Energy Efficiency 2000 Project will be implemented, inter alia, through symposia and workshops and preparation of reports and studies.

33. A study on the evaluation of alternative technologies in the pulp and paper industry, with special attention to energy and resource-saving processes, was completed by the Working Party on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Recycling and Re-utilization of Wastes (45).

34. The Committee on Human Settlements is examining methods to promote sustainable energy use in construction and human settlements without detrimental effects on the indoor climate (46).

35. The Inland Transport Committee is promoting energy savings in relation to transport policy, vehicle construction and technology and transport operations. The study focuses on road, railway and water transport and aims to improve traffic management, cooperation between transport modes and transport mode interfaces (47).

36. The Timber Committee provides a forum for exchanging information on energy conservation and self-sufficiency in the mechanical wood-processing industries. A seminar to promote the exchange of technological and statistical data and analysis of trends is planned for 1993 (48).

Industrial accidents

37. The Draft Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents has been finalized for adoption by the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems in March 1992 (49).

38. The Senior Advisers on Science and Technology have set up an inventory of existing safety guidelines in biotechnology including existing laws and regulations (50). The final results of this work are expected by 1994.

Natural resource management

39. The Timber Committee is carrying out an assessment of forest resources in the ECE region, including the supply of environmental and non-wood benefits of the forest as well as the forest contribution to society (51). Economic, silvicultural, ecological and technical aspects of the rational use of forest biomass are also analysed taking into account environmental considerations and sustainability of production (52). Solutions to the problems caused to forestry in areas contaminated by radiation from the Chernobyl disaster are being examined (53).

40. The Working Party on Relations between Agriculture and the Environment is examining measures for the elimination of effects to agriculture caused by radionuclear accidents (54). A workshop on this subject will be organized in 1992. The Working Party is studying the relation between environmental factors, including pollution by industries and other human activities, and the quantity and quality of agricultural production; economic, regulatory and institutional aspects (55) and the improvement, development and harmonization of food and agricultural statistics as well as statistics on agriculture-related environmental problems (56).

41. The Committee on Energy is promoting the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy (NRSE) (57). A survey of international cooperation on NRSE was issued (ENERGY/R.61).

42. A Code of Practice for the conservation of threatened animals and plants and other species of particular conservation concern and lists of birds and mammals of international significance for their conservation in Europe has been completed by the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems (58).

43. The Conference of European Statisticians is revising the draft ECE Framework of Fauna, Flora and Habitats for the purpose of data collection for the Compendium of Environment Statistics. The Conference also plans a pilot study in which the feasibility of organizing environmental information on broad issues will be studied. Resource/patrimony accounting will be evaluated for the issues of "nutrients in the environment" and "changes in land cover and land use" (59).

Monitoring of the state of the environment and environmental information

44. The Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems will examine existing systems for obtaining and exchanging reliable environmental information, and will consider ways of improving the monitoring of the environment in the ECE region (60).

45. The Timber Committee exchanges information on forest fires, their causes and methods of prevention and protection of forests (61). It has also set up a system of information on occurrences of sudden or severe damage to forests (62).

46. The Conference of European Statisticians is working on the development of internationally coordinated geographic information systems for the Baltic drainage basin (63) and on international environmental data service including the publication of Compendia of Environment Statistics and Statistical Environmental Monographs (64). The need for highly aggregated environmental information has led the Conference to resume work on the development of a Set of Environmental Indicators (65).

Awareness raising and public participation

47. An ad hoc meeting in 1991 elaborated a document on environmental rights and obligations for consideration by the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems. The Senior Advisers are also examining possibilities for providing guidance to countries on issues relating to responsibility and liability at national and international levels and will review relevant activities undertaken in other international fora (66).

TABLE

ECE ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT

Main areas of cooperation	Environment	Other sectors					
		Agriculture and timber	Human settlements	Industry and technology	Energy	Transport	Statistics
Environmental policy and strategy	1, 2						
Integration of environmental and economic objectives and policies	3	4	5				6
Environmental management in the light of changing socio-economic conditions	7, 8, 9, 10, 40	11, 53, 54	12	35, 36	42, 43		
Environmental impact assessment	13, 14					15	
Water management	16, 17, 18 19, 20						21
Soil management		22, 23, 24					
Air pollution problems	25, 26, 27						
Waste management	28, 29			30			31
Environmentally sound technology and products	32, 33, 34			35			
Environmentally sound management of chemicals and dangerous goods	40			36		37, 38, 39	41
Energy efficiency and conservation	45	48	46		42, 43, 44	47	
Industrial accidents	49			50			
Natural resource management	58	51, 52, 53 54, 55, 56			57		59
Monitoring of the state of the environment and environmental information	60	61, 62					63, 64, 65
Awareness raising and public participation	66						